



OUR CHANGING ISLANDS

A History of the Census in the U.S. Virgin Islands

Grades 5-12

Skills and Objectives:

- Students will learn about the census, why it is important, and how it is beneficial to the residents of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Suggested Groupings:

Small groups, individuals

Getting Started:

Ask students to guess the answers to the following questions. Write some of their answers on the board, then give them the correct answers. 1. **What is the population of the Virgin Islands?** (101,809, based on 1990 census) 2. **Are there more males or females in the Virgin Islands?** (females — 52,599; males — 49,210, based on 1990 census) 3. **What is the median age of the population in the Virgin Islands?** (28.2, based on 1990 census) 4. **What was the population of the Virgin Islands when it was transferred to the U.S. in 1917?** (26,051). Tell students that we can know the answers to these questions through data collected by the census. The U.S. Census Bureau conducts a complete count of all the people living in the Virgin Islands every 10 years. The information collected by the census includes the population of our islands, as well as people's ages, education, and occupations, etc.

- Explain to students that the first census in the Virgin Islands was taken in 1835 when the islands were still territories of Denmark. At this time the islands were called the Danish West Indies. Approximately 43,200 persons were counted then. From 1835 to 1911 the government of Denmark conducted 11 censuses. The Virgin Islands became a territory of the United States in 1917 after the United States purchased them for \$25 million. In 1917 the Census Bureau took a special census, and since 1930 the Virgin Islands has been included in all the decennial censuses taken in the United States.

Using the Activity Worksheets:

- Photocopy and distribute the Activity Worksheet (page 10) and maps (page 9 and 28), along with "Census at a Glance" (page 8).

Chalkboard Definitions

census: a count of a population in a given area.

confidential: private or secret.

decennial: occurring every 10 years.

data: factual information.

subdistrict: a geographic unit of measurement used by the Census Bureau.

- Review "Census at a Glance" (page 8) and discuss with students why the census is so important.

- Explain that they will be working in groups of four or fewer to solve the word puzzle on page 10.

Wrapping Up:

- Review the students' answers to the questions on page 10 and discuss them in class. Use these answers to initiate a discussion about population trends in the Virgin Islands and how they influence the islands' future.

Extension Activity:

Ask students to write their own questions based on the maps (pages 9 and 28) and/or the population table (page 10). Then have them exchange questions with their classmates and research the answers.

Grades 9-12: Have students review the history of their subdistrict. Ask: **When was their subdistrict established? Are its boundaries the same today as when it was established? What factors have affected the population growth of their subdistrict?** To answer these questions, students will need to obtain census information for the Virgin Islands and their subdistrict. Have them start with a visit to their local or school library.

Answers:

Page 10: 1. Cruz Bay 2. East End 3. St. John 4. St. Croix 5. Southcentral 6. Christiansted 7. Census 8. There was substantial immigration from the U.S. mainland, the eastern Caribbean, and Puerto Rico. 9. The abolition of slavery in 1848 and the subsequent migration of former slaves, and the decline in the local economy, particularly the sugar industry.

Name: _____

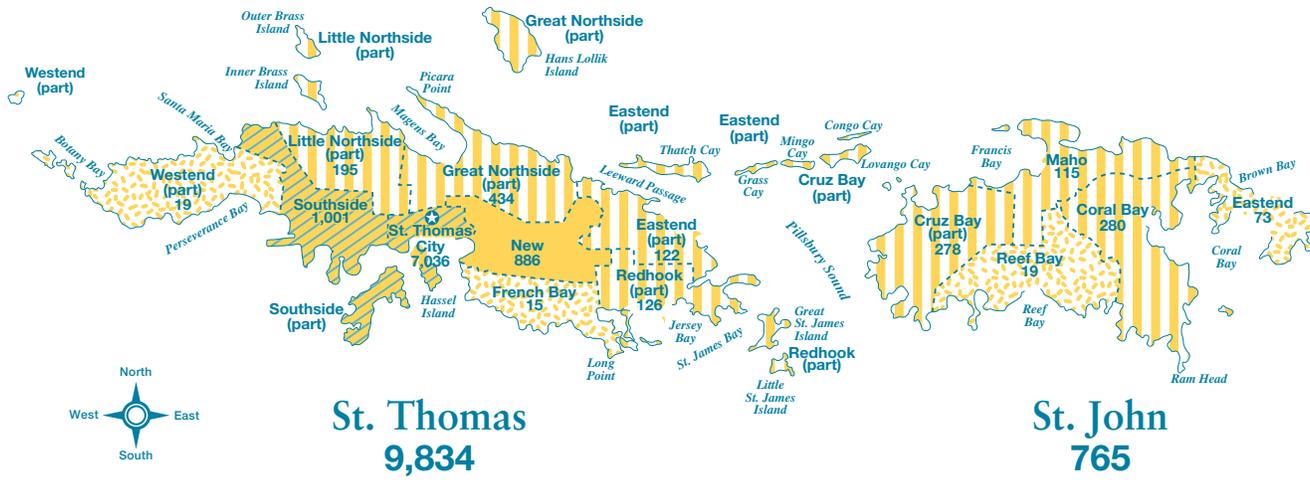
Census at a Glance

- The U.S. Census is mandated by Article 1, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution, which requires an enumeration of the population of the United States every 10 years.
- Title 13 of the United States Code, which sets out the basic laws under which we conduct a census, specifies that the U.S. Virgin Islands shall be included in the decennial census.
- On March 27, 2000, the U.S. Postal Service will deliver questionnaires called Advance Census Reports (ACRs) to every household in the U.S. Virgin Islands. ACRs ask for information about every person living in every household. A few days before the ACR arrives, each household will receive an advance letter alerting them to its delivery. Each household will be asked to complete the questionnaire and hold it until a census worker picks it up on or soon after March 31, 2000. If the ACR is not complete when the census worker arrives, then he or she will help complete it by conducting a personal interview.
- All individual information collected for the census is confidential. Census workers can be fined and/or jailed for releasing this information, and the Census Bureau itself is forbidden by law from sharing such information with other government agencies.
- The first census of the United States was taken in 1790. The first U.S. decennial census in the Virgin Islands was taken in 1930. The Virgin Islands became a part of the United States in 1917 after the United States purchased them from Denmark.
- In addition to taking a complete count of the population, the U.S. Census Bureau and the U.S. Virgin Islands Eastern Caribbean Center also collect information about housing, age, race, education, and economic indicators.
- The census is important because the information obtained from the form helps federal and local governments determine where new roads, parks, schools, hospitals, and other services are needed. A new school and library, for example, could be built in your neighborhood based on data indicating a large increase in the number of school-age children living there.
- The U.S. Census Bureau plans long in advance for every census. While conducting a census, the Census Bureau is already planning for the next census, even though it is 10 years away.
- Census day is April 1, 2000: All people living in the U.S. and its territories on this day are included in the official count.



1930 Population of U.S. Virgin Islands

ATLANTIC OCEAN



St. Thomas
9,834

St. John
765

MAP KEY

QUARTER POPULATION

- Over 1,000
- 500 - 999
- 100 - 499
- Less than 100

- Capital
- Quarter Boundary

1930 Population of U.S. Virgin Islands:
22,012



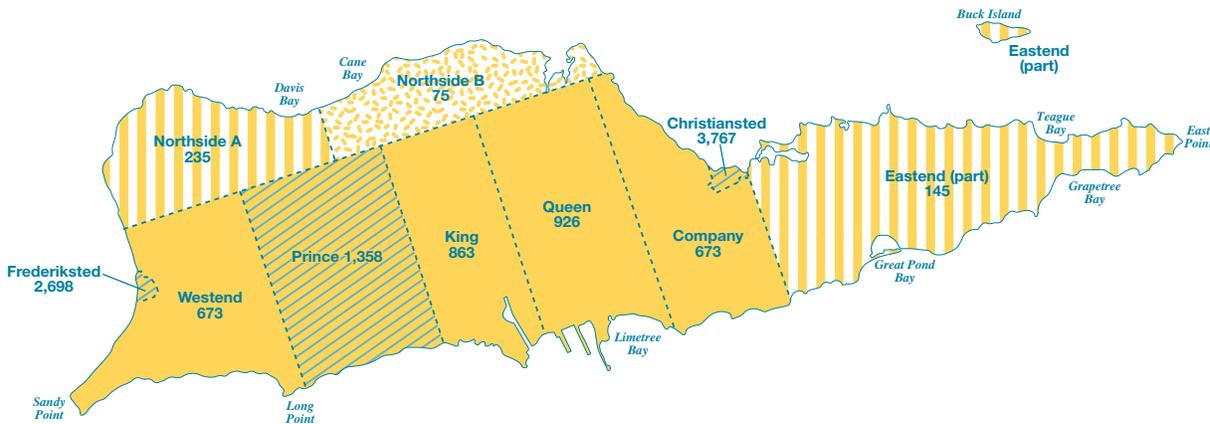
To St. Croix
40 miles

CARIBBEAN SEA

To St. John & St. Thomas
40 miles



CARIBBEAN SEA



St. Croix
11,413

All information on this map is based on 1930 Census data.



Name: _____

A History of the Census in the U.S. Virgin Islands

To answer the following questions and solve the word puzzle, you'll need to compare the 1930 and 1990 population maps of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

- The population of this subdistrict (St. John) has grown almost tenfold since 1930:
○ _____
- What was Redhook Quarter (St. Thomas) in 1930 is part of which subdistrict today?
○ _____
- This was the least populous island in 1930 and 1990:
____. _____○
- This was the most populous island in 1930 and 1990:
○____. _____
- Since 1930, this southern portion of Queen Quarter (St. Croix) has been absorbed by which subdistrict? _____○_____
- Which subdistrict (St. Croix) has lost population since 1930?
_____○_____
- What do the circled letters spell? _____

| POPULATION HISTORY OF THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS, 1835–1990 | | | | | |
|--|--------|------|--------|------|---------|
| 1835 | 43,178 | 1880 | 33,763 | 1940 | 24,889 |
| 1841 | 40,955 | 1890 | 32,786 | 1950 | 26,665 |
| 1850 | 39,614 | 1901 | 30,527 | 1960 | 32,099 |
| 1855 | 37,137 | 1911 | 27,086 | 1970 | 62,468 |
| 1860 | 38,231 | 1917 | 26,051 | 1980 | 96,569 |
| 1870 | 37,821 | 1930 | 22,012 | 1990 | 101,809 |

NOTE: A special Federal U.S. census was taken in 1917. Censuses prior to 1917 were taken by the Danish Government. The Virgin Islands has been included in every decennial census since 1930.

The table above shows the history of population growth for the Virgin Islands since 1835, which reflects important changes and events that have taken place on our islands. Using your knowledge of the history of the Virgin Islands, try to answer the following questions. Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

- How do you explain the near doubling of the population between 1960 and 1970?
- The population of the Virgin Islands declined steadily from 1835 to 1930. What accounts for this decline?